

DNRC Water Resource Division Strategic Plan 2004-2010

DRAFT

This strategic plan describes goals and objectives for the next six years. The purpose of this plan is to guide the work of the Water Resources Division, as well as to give legislators, the executive branch, and the public an understanding of the work and goals of the division.

I. Mission

Motto

The Water Resources Division (WRD) promotes and coordinates the wise use and conservation of Montana's water resources for current and future generations.

Mission Statement

The Water Resources Division is responsible for promoting and coordinating the beneficial use, conservation, protection, and development of the Montana's water resources. The Water Resources Division carries out its duties for the purpose of promoting the general welfare and economic and social prosperity of the people of Montana. Sound coordination of the development and utilization of the state's waters allows the Water Resources Division to protect existing uses and to promote adequate future supplies for domestic, industrial, agricultural, recreation, the conservation of water for wildlife, aquatic life, and other beneficial uses.

Organizational Guiding Principals

We believe that our success is derived from the people we serve, the citizens of Montana, who deserve our respect, concern, care, and attention.

We use education and outreach to promote compliance with regulations and to encourage cooperation and communication between user groups.

We strive to make fair and impartial decisions utilizing best scientific practices.

We believe in open communication and mutually beneficial partnerships with all water use groups.

We recognize that our personal conduct is inseparable from the professional reputation of the Water Resources Division.

We are committed to cost efficient resource management in delivery of services.

We recognize that our employees are our most valuable resource and we are committed to their professional development.

We support an organizational climate of mutual trust and respect.

II. Needs of Those Served by DNRC Water Resources Division

DNRC Water Resources Division serves constituents throughout Montana. Major responsibilities for its work are recorded in Title 85: Chapters 37 and 43 and in Title 76 Chapter 5 of the Montana Code Annotated.

Major stakeholders include anyone interested in the safety, quantity, allocation, use, or management of water. The Water Resources Division also acts to fulfill legislative and executive intent in formulating, analyzing, and implementing policy.

Needs

Needs identified as priorities for the 2004-2010 period are to:

- Maintain and rehabilitate state-owned facilities.
- Improve stakeholder awareness of basic water resource issues (legal, scientific, economic), services available from DNRC and potential for additional services if adequate funding was available.
- Improve access to water data and information for the public, for DNRC employees, and for other agencies in order to enhance water management.
- Improve communication with stakeholders to better understand their needs and inform and educate them on means to meet their needs.
- Enhance ability to represent Montana's interest in interstate and international compacts.
- Provide good science and monitoring to use as a basis for managing water rights and safety.
- Promote improved internal communication and collaboration.

III. Characteristics of the Division in 2004

The Water Resources Division was created by the Executive Reorganization Act of 1971. It is part of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

The Water Resources Division is made up of a central administration unit, four bureaus, and eight regions. The Bureaus are the Water Rights Bureau, State Water Projects Bureau, Water Management Bureau, and the Water Operations Bureau. The eight Regional Offices are located in Billings, Bozeman, Glasgow, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Lewistown, and Missoula.

As of 2004, the division staff count is 108.5 funded FTE, or 115 employees. The division budget under HB 2 is \$7.8 million, with an additional general fund budget of \$1.1 million for state rehabilitation projects.

Retention of highly qualified staff has been successful. However, as more of the staff reach retirement, the Water Resources Division may see significant turnover and a much lower tenure. It is expected that the division will be experiencing the effects of this retirement wave by 2010.

IV. Challenges in the Next Six Years

Public expectations for water are becoming more diverse. Water users and economic uses of water are shifting, placing greater demands on a limited supply to serve the needs of agriculture, recreation, industry, municipalities, fisheries and wildlife, water quality and aesthetics. Aging infrastructure, decreases in supply, over-allocation, conflicts between surface and ground water use, and increases in the number of basin closures and controlled ground water areas create a greater need for accurate information, sophisticated technical support, and greater capacity to manage water successfully.

The challenge of these next six years and beyond is to best serve these multiple public demands in an orderly, productive, and legal way.

Local participation and management of resources also is becoming a more practical and preferred option. Nearly 60 watershed groups exist in the state, serving as local stakeholder groups that make significant resource decisions in their drainages. Water commissioners are becoming more important as adjudication proceeds and decrees are issued, and *ad hoc* and formal working groups are tackling specific local water management issues.

Specific challenges faced by the Water Resources Division and the State are:

- Drought and the prospect of long-term limitations in water supply.
- Increasing need to understand the connection between surface and ground water and more challenges in integrating those two systems.
- Understanding the consumptive differences of flood to sprinkler irrigation conversions, educating the public of such, and integrating those differences into decision-making.
- Consequences and changes in management due to basin closures and controlled ground water areas.
- Water supply allocation issues due to bottlenecks throughout the water rights allocation, adjudication and enforcement process.
- Shift from agricultural uses to urban or multiple uses and associated conflicts.
- Shifts in the economics of water use.
- Increasing demand for sophisticated, real-time data and information on water rights and information on all aspects of watersheds pertinent to water management.
- Demand for increased technical and educational support for local efforts.
- Uncertainties in state and federal funding levels.
- Aging infrastructure (state-owned, federally-owned, and privately-owned) poses legal, economic, and safety problems.

- Approximately one-half of new and change of use water rights applications are filed after the fact, rather than up front as required by statute.
- Need and public demand for outreach and education to ensure that water users understand requirements for water use and water management.

V. Water Resources Division Goals

The Water Resources Division has six overall goals for the 2004-2010. Work unit goals in Section VI fall under one or more of these division goals and are expressed in more detail in that section.

Division Goals

Goal 1: Maintain and Improve Safety and Protection of Lives and Property for Dams and Water-related Safety Issues.

Goal 2: Protect State Water Interests

Goal 3: Enhanced Internal and External Communication, Information, and Education on Water Resources.

Objective One: Enhance collaboration on education and outreach throughout the Division by seeking opportunities to engage in cross-bureau and regional activities.

Objective Two: Form Water Resources Advisory Board composed of key non-government interest groups.

Goal 4: Ensure Protection of Water Rights.

Objective One: All work units develop, share and evaluate yearly work plans that are linked to strategic plan.

Goal 5: Provide Efficient and Consistent Implementation of Water Resources Division Programs.

Objective One: Ensure the division is well organized to accomplish our mandates and that staff responsibilities are clearly defined, communicated, and coordinated.

Task 1: Conduct an annual review of division accomplishments and work unit plans to determine if improvements in coordination and efficiency are being met.

Task 2: Assess needs of the public that are best served at the regional or the divisional level. Complete this assessment by December 31, 2006.

Task 3: Review and revise bureau and division organizational structure to respond to the needs of the public and changing work demands. Complete review of the organizational structure by December 31, 2007. Document revisions to structure as they are implemented.

VI. Strategic Goals and Objectives for Work Units

The Water Resources Division is made up of a central administration unit, four bureaus, and eight regional offices. Additionally, it contains an IT function that is implemented by individuals housed throughout the department. IT is largely discussed in the administration unit.

In order to delineate strategic goals and responsibilities, each of these work units have goals listed in sections pertaining to that work unit.

A. Administration

Administration oversees, guides and provides resources for the entire division. Its functions include financial administration, personnel administration, and support for office administration throughout the Helena office. It also acts as the chief liaison for communication with the legislature, the department and the executive branch. The administrator is the chief manager and advocate for the work of the Water Resources Division.

Information Technology is also integrated into administrative duties, although personnel who work on these tasks are assigned throughout the division.

Goal 1: Ensure effective staffing of the division.

Objective 1: Retain competent employees with 90% of staff showing “Meets or Exceeds Expectations” on annual performance appraisals.

Task 1: Support an annual Awards Program and supply optional training opportunities to recognize employees doing excellent work.

Task 2: Identify innovative award ideas for promoting teamwork and enhancing a positive atmosphere and image for the division.

Task 3: Each supervisor will conduct and utilize annual performance appraisals to improve staff performance.

Task 4: Continue to move to the market rates identified in Pay Plan 20 for all employees below market.

Objective 2: Increase staff proficiency of computer applications, software and hard water to at least 90% and maintain this strong and productive level.

Task 1: Develop and conduct survey to determine current level of staff proficiency of computer applications, software and hardware. Refine and continue to conduct annual survey to measure success.

Task 2: Provide timely operating system and software upgrades (as released and required) and hardware replacement (3 year life cycle, as per DNRC IT Plan).

Task 3: Provide training to staff when appropriate (software updates, new employees) to maintain and improve division staff's proficient use of software and hardware for work unit specific applications.

Task 4: Train staff so that at least 90% are able to do their own computer's critical updates for operating systems and software packages.

Task 5: Focus existing training or conduct new employee training for their program's specific software and hardware needs.

Task 6: Provide ongoing technology support and expertise to maintain, improve or develop new applications for division staff work processes.

Task 7: Develop and implement online input forms for all water rights applications by July 2005.

Task 8: Develop portals for external data inputs and forms, for example, remote water measurement devices auto-updating web page information.

Task 9: Support database development by staff, for example, water related contact information database, water rights database, GIS data access, GIS data development.

Objective 3: Improve effective use of Geographic Information System (GIS) applications by showing a 25% reduction in GIS-related requests for information.

Task 1: Establish and maintain GIS expertise in each regional office by 2006.

Task 2: Provide self-guided training and (or) classroom training for GIS software program updates, and establish a certified trainer resource for training new employees utilizing GIS software where needed. Contact GIS-specific IT small contractors with the State of Montana listings for contracted training options.

Task 3: Provide timely training for GIS applications developed specifically for WRD program needs.

Task 4: Expand GIS Program staff to support division GIS workload as budgets and division priorities allow.

Goal 2 – Improve opportunities for the exchange of communications.

Objective 4: Maintain and increase constructive feedback from both the staff and the public by surveying staff annually through performance appraisals and by having DNRC's Public Information Officer research establishing a survey mechanism on the DNRC website.

Task 1: Post updated maps of division activities to the Internet web page. Coordinate with program managers for this activity.

Task 2: Develop a process to distribute pertinent GIS datasets to NRIS for public access and maintain an update page on our DNRC WRD web pages for linking to that data and information about the updates. Establish this process by meeting with NRIS personnel by September 2004, and begin implementing the data distribution by December 2004. Updates and further data distribution would occur on a regular or as-needed basis.

Task 3: Establish a listserve for interested individuals public/governmental for updates from WRD, or departmental public relations.

Task 4: It personnel will meet with bureau chiefs at least annually to discuss advances in technology that could be utilized by the division to improve efficiencies.

Task 5: Improve the involvement of the public in division decision-making by creating a Water Resources Advisory Committee that would meet semi-annually to discuss pertinent and timely topics.

Goal 3 – Provide sound financial accountability for the division.

Objective 5: Provide accurate fiscal reports and ensure revenues and expenditures are monitored, tracked, and are in compliance with all laws, policies, and legislative directives.

Task 1: Assist managers in oversight of their work budgets by providing them with the appropriate software, training, and information.

Task 2: Provide timely information for fiscal decisions to use resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

B. Regional Offices

The regional offices are the first and most frequent point of contact most Montana water users have with the DNRC Water Resources Division. The primary purpose of each regional office is to implement the division's varied water programs. These programs include new water right appropriations, changes to existing appropriations, water rights adjudication, water right records, floodplain management, dam safety, state-owned water projects, water planning, and a variety of other activities and special projects.

Goal 4: Administer water rights in an orderly manner.

Objective 1: Improve water user compliance with Water Use Act. Compliance includes water users:

- a) Making changes or new appropriations only after Department approval.**
- b) Compliance with change or permit conditions.**
- c) Allowing water to pass to senior appropriators.**

Task 1: Provide information and training to increase awareness regarding the requirements of the Water Use Act, water measurement, and mediation. Conduct annual workshop and provide training for water commissioners and water users as opportunities arise.

Task 2: Seek to resolve water use violations and conflicts first through negotiation and mediation. If not successful, pursue injunctive relief and fines. 75% of complaints resolved to the WRD's satisfaction by 2008. Reduce illegal use while obtaining a change or permit by 50% by 2008.

Task 3: Conduct peer review of enforcement actions to identify weaknesses and strengths of WRD action and ranking actions as satisfactory or unsatisfactory with overall 90% satisfactory rating by 2010.

Objective 2: Equitable and consistent water distribution by water commissioners.

Task 1: 75% commissioners attend training by 2008.

Task 2: Regional Office staff working field with a sample (50%) of commissioners to verify competence by 2008.

Objective 3: Accurate and consistent review of water rights in adjudication and new appropriations programs.

Task 1: Peer and supervisor review of a sample of claim examination and change processing identifying weaknesses and strengths of WRD action and ranking actions as satisfactory or unsatisfactory with overall 75% satisfactory rating by 2008.

Goal 5: Implement Water Resource Division programs through planning and cooperation between division program managers and the Regional Offices.

Objective 1: Implement appropriate and identified Division programs and projects through cooperation and collaboration between the central and regional offices.

Task 1: Bureau Chiefs and Regional Managers meet annually to develop and evaluate work plans to determine tasks that will be completed by central office and regional office personnel.

C. Water Rights Bureau

The Water Rights Bureau administers the Montana Water Use Act under Title 85, Chapter 2, Montana Codes annotated. This act provides for adjudicating Montana's existing or pre-1973 water rights, the Adjudication Program; acquiring new water rights and changing existing water rights, the New Appropriations Program; and a centralized water right record system. Bureau responsibilities include issuing and processing Provisional Water Use Permits, Interim Permits, Temporary Permits, Water Reservations, Notice of Completion of Groundwater Developments, Petitions for Basin Closure, Petitions for Controlled Groundwater Area, and Authorizations to Change Water Rights, some of which are associated with salvaged water rights and the leasing of water rights for temporary changes and instream flow. The Bureau also provides technical and administrative assistance to the Water Court, is responsible for formulating policy to address water use violations, and provides water rights direction and support to the division's eight regional offices.

Goal 6: Maintain and improve a centralized water rights records system.

Objective 1: Improve public access to records by 2010.

Task 1: All paper records scanned, integrated with database, and available on-line.

Task 2: Integrate GIS with database to provide geo-spatial data about water rights.

Task 3: All paper files independently stored, and archived separately.

Objective 2: Improve accuracy in water right records by 2010.

Task 1: Use cadastral survey to update water right ownerships and provide public notice.

Task 2: Assist Water Court in accurately entering their claim modifications

Task 3: Correct errors where applicable.

Task 4: Provide guidance to staff entering data to standardize input.

Goal 7: Provide certainty and stability among pre-1973 water users and protect existing water rights from adverse effects.

Objective 1: Complete claims examination within 10 years.

Task 1: Seek resources necessary to decrease time needed to complete claims examination.

Task 2: Review existing procedures and organization to measure efficiency and effectiveness.

Objective 2: Improve enforcement mechanisms.

Task 1: Produce accurate and enforceable decrees.

Task 2: Review effectiveness of existing mechanisms and propose improvements.

Task 3: Ensure objectors to new appropriations applications have due process of law.

Goal 8: Provide opportunities for new water users and economic development.

Objective 1: Efficiently process new appropriation applications.

Task 1: Applications available to file and submit on-line.

Task 2: Adopt rules.

Objective 2: Make timely decisions on applications.

Task 1: Eliminate backlog of applications by making correct and complete decisions within 180 days.

Task 2: Reduce hearings backlog so hearings are scheduled within 180 days of receipt from Regional Office.

Objective 3: Identify sources of water available for economic development by 2010.

Task 1: Determine where water is physically and legally available for further development.

Task 2: Create water availability report including water rights that may be available for sale or change.

Task 3: Identify types of augmentation plans, which may provide additional water to a source to mitigate the depletion effects of a permit or change authorization.

Goal 9: Reduce litigation and resolve conflict where policy questions remain in the water use laws.

Objective 1: Provide clear legal interpretation of Montana water use law.

Task 1: Adopt rules to clarify department interpretation of statutes and administrative procedures.

Task 2: Issue department orders to establish policy precedents.

Task 3: Maintain a current decision index.

Objective 2: Collaborate with interest groups on a continual basis to encourage discussion of alternatives.

Task 1: Semi-annual meetings with individual interest groups.

Task 2: Sponsor biennial conference on hot button water issues prior to Legislature.

Task 3: Appear regularly on EQC agenda, as appropriate.

D. State Water Projects Bureau

The State Water Projects Bureau administers the operation and maintenance of state-owned water projects, including 25 DNRC dams, approximately 300 miles of irrigation canals, and one 10 megawatt hydropower facility. The Bureau is also responsible for dam safety of 10 dams owned by the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The Bureau manages contracts made by the Department for the sale or use of water from the storage projects. Additionally, the Bureau provides technical assistance to rehabilitate dams and other water control structures belonging to the state.

Goal 10: Operate and maintain DNRC and FWP-owned dams in a way that protects lives and property.

Objective 1: Maintain operating permits for 25 DNRC and 3 DFWP high-hazard dams to ensure compliance with the Montana Dam Safety Act.

Task 1: Analyze above structures pending modifications to requirements under the Dam Safety Act.

Task 2: Annually update emergency action plans and O&M Manuals as warranted.

Task 3: Analyze/evaluate stability and seepage issues on all high hazard structures.

Task 4: Perform annual inspections, necessary maintenance, and enhance related safety procedures.

Task 5: Complete remaining work on Nevada Creek rehabilitation project.

Task 6: Proceed with and complete rehabilitation of the North Fork of the Smith Dam.

Goal 11: Operate, maintain, and rehabilitate DNRC-owned water projects and assist in development of other water resources infrastructure.

Objective 1: Annually update all Operation & Maintenance and Emergency Action Plans for all DNRC-owned high-hazard structures.

Task 1: Monitor and itemize changes to individual projects relating to operations, specifications, personnel changes, contacts, etc.

Objective 2: Manage contract water delivery to water users associations.

Task 1: Regular communications with the water users board of directors, water judges, water commissioners for each association during the irrigation season.

Task 2: Monitor reservoir levels on a monthly or bi-monthly basis throughout the water year.

Objective 3: Operate the Broadwater Hydroelectric Power Project to maximize net revenues and comply with FERC requirements.

Task 1: Minimize down-time by ensuring that the project is operational and defects are repaired quickly and effectively.

Task 2: Comply with FERC regulations and/or special requirements as they arise.

Objective 4: Continue with state water project dam rehabilitation planning and construction on at least six dams.

Task 1: Proceed with risk analyses on state water projects based on new spillway standards, seismic analysis, and other emerging factors.

Task 2: Establish funding sources for engineering and construction for rehabilitation of Ruby Dam, Painted Rocks Dam, Willow Creek Dam, Cataract Dam, and Frenchman Dam.

Objective 5: Conduct at least one canal rehabilitation project per legislative cycle.

Task 1: All DNRC-owned canals will be inventoried in a GIS (field asset management) format.

Task 2: A “Scheduled Inspection & Maintenance Plan” will be developed for each of DNRC’s canal systems.

Task 3: Rehabilitation of the Smith Creek Canal, Deadman’s Supply Canal, the Flint Creek Project, Martinsdale outlet canal, Nevada Creek Project’s delivery canals, and the Middle Creek’s Cottonwood Canal system will be undertaken pending adequate funding.

Objective 6: Provide engineering and technical support for DFWP reservoirs and dams.

Task 1: Provide engineering and technical support for Park Lake rehabilitation by Spring 2005.

Task 2: Perform inspections, seepage monitoring and engineering analysis on DFWP dams, including risk analyses, feasibility analyses and cost estimates for rehabilitation as requested by DFWP.

Task 3: Complete engineering designs, bidding documents and construction contracts on DFWP projects requiring rehabilitation as requested by DFWP.

Task 4: Maintain and update Emergency Action Plans and Operation and Maintenance Manuals on DFWP dams that are permitted by the Montana Dam Safety Act.

Goal 12: Identify, prioritize and transfer selected projects to reduce State's administration and management liabilities.

Objective 1: Prioritize projects for transfer by 2010.

Task 1: Locate, identify, and inventory projects.

Task 2: Use guiding criteria, including benefits to the State and multi vs. single purpose use, and exposure to liability to rank projects in priority of disposal.

Task 3: Implement transfer process.

Task 4: Add additional FTE or part time FTE to assist in transfers, as division priorities allow.

E. Water Management Bureau

The Water Management Bureau (WMB) focus its efforts to provide technical, educational and planning support to water users, local watershed groups, and water interests in helping them prevent and solve water problems, resolve conflicts, increase water conservation, improve water management, and to develop state wide tools for improving site specific and statewide water management.

THE MONTANA WATERCOURSE

The Montana Watercourse is a neutral educational program based at Montana State University-Bozeman. Its charge is to provide unbiased information, education, and support for all water users. Its director is a DNRC Water Resources Division employee in the Water Management Bureau. All other employees are MSU employees, paid through funds raised by the director.

Goal 13: Provide citizens, governments and local watershed groups with the information needed to make informed water resource allocation and management decisions.

Objective 1: Compile a comprehensive inventory of Montana water resources by watershed, as directed under [85-1-203(1,5, and 6) MCA].

Task 1: Prioritize watershed by (1) opportunity (where are there interested, engaged water users), and (2) critical need as defined by other controversy, conflict or urgency.

Task 2: Identify types of technical information that is needed, existing sources, and gaps for information including: acres irrigated acres; water diverted and consumed for irrigation; other water users, opportunities for new irrigation and water storage; in-stream requirements; efficiencies of canals and on-farm usage; surface and groundwater hydrology; the inter-relationship of surface and ground water within each watershed; and other relevant hydrologic factors.

Task 3: As information is gathered, ensure that it is available on the NRIS water database, website, and compiled in comprehensive reports.

Objective 2: Provide sound technical information on controversial surface water and groundwater water rights applications and change in use applications and determine how they might impact other water users.

Task 1: Provide technical and policy staff support to the other bureaus. Provide technical review of new water right and change in use applications. Prepare environmental assessments and EIS on complex water right issues, applications, and other requests.

Objective 3: Work with water users, watershed groups and other local, state and federal government agencies to access and use the above and other sources of information to make informed decisions on preventing and resolving water use conflicts, preventing problems, improving basin-wide water management, cumulative impact assessments on river channels and water uses, and developing and implementing drought management plans in a timely and professional manner.

Task 1: Provide new and ongoing technical and planning support to watershed groups and other entities each year to increase their capacity to understand, manage and resolve local water resource issues in a timely and professional manner. Currently, more than 25 watershed and user groups are served. Staff support and technical assistance will remain at that level or increase.

Task 2: Provide ongoing staff support from Helena and from Montana Watercourse to the Montana Watershed Coordination Council to enhance data exchange, dialogue, education and technical assistance between state and federal government agencies and the many watershed facilitator and watershed groups in Montana.

Task 3: Respond effectively to federal legislation and policies that protect, benefit or impact the water resources and the management of these resources in Montana.

Task 4: Provide educational information and support to at least 20 watershed groups, conservation groups, or other water user groups yearly through Montana Watercourse.

Task 5: Provide quality information, materials and education to over 2,000 Montana water users each year through Montana Watercourse.

Task 6: Provide technical information to Division staff, watershed groups and other state, local and federal agencies so that the best data and analyses are

available to those making water management decisions and to those resolving water use conflicts.

Objective 4: Provide state expertise to rehabilitate the St. Mary canal and diversions works and the enlargement of Fresno Reservoir by 2009.

Task 1: Provide ongoing technical and staff support for the collaborative efforts to repair the system.

Task 2: Support efforts to focus sufficient resources (estimated 75-150 million dollars) on the problem in order to meet the 2009 deadline.

Goal 14: Protect Montana's water from external threats.

Objective 1: Work to persuade the International joint commission to reopen the 1921 IJC Order that apportions the flows of the Milk and St. Mary Rivers by December 2005.

Task 1: Develop the technical and political basis in order to reopen IJF

Task 2: Provide the appropriate technical and legal analysis to modify the order to ensure that the United States and Montana receives its fair share of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers under the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty.

Objective 2: Work with Parks Canada and British Columbia government to protect the water resources in the North Fork of the Flathead River Basin in Montana.

Task 1: React to and respond to information from British Columbia on new land use activities that could impact the Flathead River Basin in Montana.

Task 2: Bring in the International Joint Commission on international issues in this drainage, if changes warrant it.

Objective 3: Develop a technical foundation and legal strategy for implementing the Yellowstone River Compact.

Task 1: Analyze and determine whether cooperation can or litigation must be used with the State of Wyoming to protect Montana's pre-1950 water right.

Task 2: Develop a workable apportionment formula of post-1950 water in accordance with the Compact.

Task 3: Monitor coal-bed methane well development by Wyoming and, by 2007 assess its effect on flows received by Montana, particularly in the Powder and Tongue rivers as it relates to the administration of the Yellowstone River Compact.

Objective 4: Determine whether Columbia River system operations and downstream water development are affecting flows, reservoir levels, and associated resources in Montana.

Task 1: Monitor situation and determine whether action is needed yearly.

Objective 5: Protect Montana's interests in the operations of Fort Peck Dam and Reservoir and the Missouri River downstream of the reservoir.

Task 1: Work with the Corps of Engineers, the Governor's staff, Lower Missouri Conservation Reserve Management and other agencies and interest groups to best determine if and when operational changes are viable.

F. Water Operations Bureau

The Water Operations Bureau is responsible for the administration of the Montana dam safety compliance program, the floodplain management program and the water measurement program, and it provides administrative and technical support to the Board of Water Well Contractors.

The tasks of these four units are:

SAFETY OF DAMS PERMIT PROGRAM

The Montana Dam Safety Program oversees construction and operation of high-hazard dams. High hazard means the dam is 50 acre-feet or larger and if failure should occur, loss of life is likely. There are approximately 90 high-hazard dams in the state that are permitted by this program.

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Floodplain Management Program seeks to minimize the loss of human lives and damage to personal and public property from floods through nonstructural means. The program has two distinct but related components - one involves the administration of the state's Floodplain and Floodway Act and the other is the administration of the federal National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) through a contract with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

WATER MEASUREMENT

The Water Measurement program encourages better management of water diversions and water use by water users on watercourses or portions of watercourses that are chronically dewatered and have public or environmental impacts or have conflicts among water rights holders. The program provides administrative and technical assistance regarding development of drought plans, water use allocations, monitoring water supplies and water use, and installation and use of water controlling and measurement devices. The program is also responsible for making formal designations of chronically dewatered watercourses that require controlling and measuring devices where practicable.

BOARD OF WATER WELL CONTRACTORS

The Montana Board of Water Well Contractors (Board) is administratively attached to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Water Resources Division, Water Operations Bureau. The Board's purpose is to minimize the waste and contamination of groundwater resources through licensing and regulation of drillers of water and monitoring wells. The Board is charged with protecting health and general

welfare by overseeing the development of underground water in an orderly, sanitary, and reasonable manner. The Board develops and enforces standards to ensure that drilling and completing water wells and monitoring wells are done properly. The DNRC provides administrative and professional support to the Board.

Goal 15: Improve Water Operations Bureau communication with public.

Objective 1: Develop efficient and effective methods and procedures to communicate with program clients.

Task 1: Complete six outreach/education sessions to local government officials including county commissioners and city officials concerning issues of floodplain, dam safety, and water well construction.

Task 2: Develop mailing lists and provide 4 newsletters per year and deliver by e-mail and regular mail.

Task 3: Update and maintain a bureau web site to provide current application forms and education materials of the 4 bureau programs.

Task 4: Have an up-to-date and an integrated centralized contacts database for each of the 4 programs contacts and mailing lists.

Goal 16: Assure that dams in Montana are constructed, operated, and maintained properly without undue danger to downstream inhabitants and property yet balancing the crucial role in maintaining the vitality of Montana 's economy.

Objective 1: Administer a permit program for high hazard dams by evaluating, granting or denying, within 60 days, applications for construction or major repair of a high hazard dam, granting, renewing or denying, within 90 days, applications for an operation permit of a high hazard dam.

Task 1: Visit up to 30 high hazard dams per year to assure compliance with the operation permit.

Task 2: Monitor construction and quality control on 5 construction projects on high hazard dams per year.

Task: Participate in and direct 5 test exercises of emergency action plans of 5 permitted high hazard dams per year.

Task 3: Conduct and provide one training session for private engineers and one for high hazard dam owners each year on an aspect of dam safety related to high hazard dams.

Task 4: Conduct up to 10 investigations of complaints of unsafe dams per year and issue orders or recommendations to assure a safe dam.

Task 5: Improve collection of seepage monitoring data on high hazard dams by providing training and outreach to encourage dam owners to use the web-based seepage monitoring program.

Objective 2: Decrease failures and safety problems on new and existing small dams.

Task 1: Provide a guidance manual for construction and maintenance of small dams and work with other agencies to coordinate outreach efforts.

Task 2: Increase availability of private and federal grant funds to private high hazard dam owners for construction and inspection where there are public benefits.

Objective 3: Improve communication between all dam owners (state water users, private dam owners)

Task 1: Facilitate development of a “Dam Safety” organization.

Goal 17: Assure that water diverted from chronically dewatered streams is used efficiently and effectively.

Objective 1: Ensure that seventy-five percent of the water users on the 10 special-management streams have installed measuring devices and are using the measuring devices to better manage water diversions and use.

Task 1: Provide technical assistance and conservation education to water users on the Big Hole, Jefferson Rivers and four other rivers, streams or watershed groups per year as requested.

Task 2: Enforce the requirement for water measuring devices on water diversions on each stream that is officially designated as a chronically dewatered stream by providing 1 technical workshop per stream per year and field checking 20% of the water diversions per year. Presently Mill Creek and the Musselshell River have been formally designated as chronically dewatered streams.

Goal 18: Promote and coordinate the management and regulation of flood prone lands and waters in a manner consistent with sound land and water use management practices that will prevent and alleviate flooding threats to life and health and reduce private and public economic losses.

Objective 1: Develop and provide maps and information of flood hazard areas.

Task 1: Facilitate new and updated flood hazard maps for watercourses where development is occurring in Gallatin, Carbon, Beaverhead, Jefferson, Flathead, Missoula, Sanders, Ravalli, Stillwater, Madison, and Big Horn Counties.

Task 2: Develop partnerships with state/federal/local/private entities for funding a 10-year mapping program in each county.

Task 3: Develop a plan and strategy in coordination with FEMA’s Map Modernization Program to establish and on-going mapping program and support staff to support a 10 year program of mapping flood hazard area for the listed counties.

Objective 2: Update and clarify state floodplain laws and administrative rules.

Task 1: Annually review and update administrative rules and model local government ordinances.

Task 2: Prepare proposed legislation for updates to the state statute by 2006 Executive Planning Process.

Objective 3: Provide education and outreach to public and local communities on floodplain management.

Task 1: Provide one staff person for technical and administrative assistance to local officials of 911 units of local governments to manage flood-prone lands, including the adoption, enforcement, and administration of land use regulations.

Task 2: Conduct 10 workshops and training sessions per year for various constituents of the floodplain program.

Task 3: Issue 4 newsletters per year.

Task 4: Conduct performance audits of 26 local community flood management programs and report the results to the National Flood Insurance Program.

Goal 19: Ensure the competency of monitoring water well drillers and contractors and prevent the waste and contamination of groundwater resources within the state.

Objective 1: Improve data quality on well log forms.

Task 1: Facilitate 4 training sessions with the Montana Bureau of Mines to provide training to licensed well drillers on accessing the Ground Water Information Center (GWIC) web site and filing electronic well logs each year.

Task 2: Provide 4 regional training sessions to licensed well drillers per year on reading maps and utilizing GPS, and properly describing the lithology on well logs yearly.

Objective 2: Assure properly constructed water wells.

Task 1: Annually review and update water well construction standards detailed in administrative rules.

Task 2: Annually review and update technical study materials for license exams.

Task 3: Facilitate one technical training session at the Montana Well Drillers Association annual convention.

Task 4: Administer all tests and manage all licenses of monitoring well and water well drillers and contractors.

VII. Evaluation, Review, and Integration into Work Plans

The strategic plan is an ambitious document designed to push the division to achieve consistent excellence. However, changes in needs, resources, or conditions may necessitate mid-course corrections. In order to ensure that the division is not just working efficiently on today's identified high-priority issues, but also actively responding to emerging challenges of tomorrow, an evaluation and review process is necessary.

Evaluation

By fulfilling Task 1 for the overall Division Goal 5, all work units will complete a work plan every year. At the end of the year, each work unit will be responsible for assessing its success in completing the work plan.

Managers will have an annual meeting or conference call to talk about how they did--or didn't--implement the plan during the previous year and how they intend to follow the plan during the upcoming year.

These evaluations will be used to determine where allocation of resources and staff time can be improved to better meet identified needs in the following year. It will also be used to determine if changes in tasks or objectives are needed in order to more effectively meet work unit goals.

A short briefing paper on progress and constraints to further work will be prepared before each legislative session, based on the findings of each work unit.

Review

The DNRC Water Resources Division updates its strategic plan in its entirety every six years, to coincide with off years in the legislative cycle. Work shall start on the new strategic work plan in the beginning of the fiscal year immediately after the legislature ends (FY 2011). A small steering committee will be assembled, a structure for building a new strategic plan determined, and a timeline established. The new strategic plan will be completed by the end of FY 2011.